

HOONAH SOUND HERRING SPAWN-ON-KELP POUND FISHERY

1995 MANAGEMENT PLAN



Regional Information Report¹ No. 1J94-28

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Commercial Fisheries Management and Development Division
Juneau, Alaska

December 1994

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
REGULATIONS	2
HERRING STOCK STATUS	3
PERMIT APPLICATION PROCEDURES	4
PERMIT REQUIREMENTS	4
HARVEST OF KELP	6
ALLOCATION OF GUIDELINE HARVEST	7
HARVEST AND PRODUCTION	7
FISHERY CONDUCT AND MANAGEMENT	7
REQUIREMENTS FOR BUYERS	8
LICENSE REQUIREMENTS	8
NEW REGULATIONS EFFECTIVE IN 1995	9
OTHER AGENCY REQUIREMENTS	10
U.S. Forest Service	10
National Marine Fisheries Service	10
United States Coast Guard	10
LIST OF MANAGEMENT CONTACTS	16

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
1. Hoonah Sound herring stock spawn survey, 1981-199	12
2. Hoonah Sound herring spawn-on-kelp fishery summary, 1990-199	13

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
1. Spawn-on-Kelp boundary area for herring pound structures	14
2. Coast Guard requirements for marking pounds	15

INTRODUCTION

This plan provides an overview of the management approach and regulations for the 1995 Hoonah Sound Spawn-On-Kelp Pound Fishery. Staff biologists listed at the end of this document are available to answer questions. Pound operators are also advised to review requirements of other agencies as described on pp. 11-12.

A pound fishery involves releasing sexually mature herring into a net impoundment in which kelp is suspended. The herring are released from the pound after they spawn on the kelp, and the kelp with eggs is then sold.

In 1994, 123 fishermen operated pounds in Hoonah Sound. They harvested 32.7 tons of spawn-on-kelp valued at 1,200,000. This compared to 1993 when 115 operators harvested 14.0 tons valued at \$345,000.

Historical herring spawning information for Hoonah Sound is shown in Table 1. In 1994, approximately 9.0 nautical miles of spawn were observed from April 21-23. The spawning biomass estimate derived from dive surveys was 2,450 tons of herring. The threshold, or minimum amount of herring spawning biomass for this fishery to occur, has been set at 1,000 tons. A summary of pertinent information for this fishery is shown in Table 2.

The following is a calendar of events to be considered by pound operators.

- December 7 - Department of Fish and Game pound permit applications will be available.
- December 13-16 - Meetings in Klawock, Craig, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Juneau and Sitka to consider limited entry.
- January 3 - Written comments to CFEC due.
- January 31 - Deadline for submitting an application to the Department of Fish and Game for a pound permit.
- February 8 - The department will issue a permit to each applicant that has met the January 31 deadline.
- February 10 - U.S. Forest Service special-use permit applications are due.
- April 1 - A completed pound must be present on the fishing grounds.
- April 2 - A department representative will be on the grounds to inspect each pound.

- April 5 - Allocations will be made for each pound operator that has a completed pound in the fishing area.
- April 5 - Kelp permits will be available.
- April 6 - The fishery will open to the capture of herring to be transferred into pounds.
- June 7 - Pounds must be completely removed from the water.

REGULATIONS

The Alaska Board of Fisheries approved the following regulations creating the Hoonah Sound pound fishery: 5AAC 27.110. FISHING SEASONS (f), 5AAC 27.130. GEAR (e), and 5AAC 27.185. MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HERRING SPAWN-ON-KELP IN POUNDS. (a) through (h).

1. Herring spawn-on-kelp in pounds may be taken only during periods established by emergency order.
2. Herring pounds for the taking of spawn-on-kelp in pounds may be operated only under terms of a permit issued by the department.
3. Pounds for the taking of herring spawn-on-kelp may be operated only in waters of Section 13-C in Hoonah Sound west of a line from Point Marie to the northern shore of Hoonah Sound at 57°37'23" N. latitude 135°27'00" W. longitude (see Figure 1).
4. The current allocation allows for 150 tons of herring to be captured and transferred to the pounds. The spawn-on-kelp harvest objective was set based on the ratio of one ton of spawn-on-kelp for each 12.5 tons of herring allocated to the fishery. This will allow for a 1995 quota of 12 tons of spawn-on-kelp product. The department will manage the fishery to achieve this harvest objective by restricting those persons holding permits to a specified number of kelp blades.
5. The department shall divide the harvest allocation and the amount of herring available for impounding equally among permit holders.
6. The operator of a pound shall apply for a permit issued by the department no later than January 31 of each calendar year.

7. The permit must specify the following:
 - (a) The date by which pounds must be operational.
 - (b) The size of, identification requirements for, and method of operation of pounds.
 - (c) The location and methods for taking, retention, and release of herring and kelp to be used in a pound for the production of herring spawn-on-kelp.
 - (d) The harvest reporting requirements for pound operators; and
 - (e) Other guidelines determined by the department to be necessary for the conservation and management of herring and kelp, and the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.
8. A representative of the department will inspect and seal each container of spawn-on-kelp (including trimmings) before it is transported from the grounds for processing.
9. Herring for placement in herring spawn-on-kelp pounds may be captured only with purse seines or hand purse seines.
10. Herring for placement in herring spawn-on-kelp pounds may be captured in Section 13-C (Hoonah Sound) from April 6 until closed by emergency order.
11. The maximum size for a herring pound net in Section 13-C may not exceed a 400 square foot opening at the water surface.

HERRING STOCK STATUS

Historically, the Hoonah Sound herring stock size has been approximately 1,500 tons of spawning biomass (Table 1). However, in 1989, a record spawn of 17 nautical miles was recorded and the spawning population was estimated to be approximately 4,000 tons. In 1994, 9.0 nautical miles of spawn was recorded, resulting in a spawning biomass of 2,450 tons.

Herring spawning normally occurs in Hoonah Sound between the last week in April and the first week in May. The earliest recorded spawning occurred April 13, 1990. Traditionally, spawning occurs around Vixen and Emmons Islands and the shoreline from Fick Cove to Rodgers Point. Occasionally spawning has been observed along the Chichagof Island shoreline from Finger River to Broad Island.

PERMIT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

To establish eligibility for the 1995 pound fishery, an operator must submit a permit application to any Southeast Alaska Fish and Game office by January 31, 1995. Applications sent by mail must be postmarked no later than January 31. Permit applications will be available by December 7, 1994 at any Southeast, Fish and Game Area Office, or they can be obtained by writing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Management and Development Division, 304 Lake Street, Room 103, Sitka, Alaska 99835-7563.

On, or about, February 8, the department will issue a permit to each applicant who has met the January 31 deadline. The permit will specify conditions that will be required of each pound operator.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Existing regulations require the department to establish permit stipulations for management of the Hoonah Sound pound fishery. The following stipulations will be specified on each permit:

1. A herring spawn-on-kelp pound is defined as a rigid frame structure with adequate buoyancy to support a net enclosure and spawn-on-kelp, used to retain herring alive over extended periods of time. If 150 lbs. of weight placed on any side of the pound submerges a side of the structure, the pound will be declared ineligible.
2. Each permit holder must operate a single pound. Pound operators may cooperatively work together by connecting and anchoring their pounds together. However, each pound must have its own net enclosure and be capable of retaining herring when separated from other pounds.
3. Each permit holder is required to have a completed pound in the fishing area by April 1. A pound will be considered complete when it is fully assembled, anchored offshore, and ready for the installation of the webbing. A department representative will be in the fishing area on April 2 to ensure that each pound is fully assembled. Pound operators need not be present at their pound site for this inspection, however, pounds must be clearly identified as stated in requirement #5.
4. Permit holders may locate their pound only in the following waters; Section 13-C: in the waters of Hoonah Sound west of a line from Point Marie to a point on the northern shore of Hoonah Sound at 57°37'23" N. latitude, 135°27'00" W. longitude (Figure 1).

5. Each pound must be identified by an upright sign in a conspicuous place with the permittee's full name and the number which is assigned on the stick-on label on the first page of the permit. Letters and numbers must be at least 6 inches high and with lines at least one-half inch wide that contrast with the background. Pound numbers must also be permanently affixed to the top surface of the pound structure.
6. Each pound must be constructed to include 6 feet of surplus webbing. Initially, this webbing should be gathered at the surface in such a manner that it can be easily lowered into the water if the submerged webbing becomes egg-saturated to the extent that it prevents adequate water circulation which could cause suffocation of impounded herring.
7. Each permit holder must be physically present in the fishing area continuously from the time herring are introduced into the pound until the spawn-on-kelp is harvested.
8. The set opening date when pound operators may capture herring to be transferred into pounds will be 12:01 a.m., April 6, 1995. If it appears that spawning will occur earlier than this date, the fishery may need to be opened earlier by Field Announcement to avoid the loss of the fishery.
9. Purse seines and hand purse seines will be the only legal gear to harvest herring for the pounds.
10. The transport of herring to the pound site must be done with the pound itself or a towable net pen. Transporting with a purse seine will not be allowed. Pound operators are also advised to tow slowly to avoid crushing herring against the net.
11. As a general rule, herring may be held for a maximum of eight days or until they are 80% spawned out, whichever occurs first. Retention of herring for longer periods will be allowed only with special authorization by the department.
12. Open pounding will not be a legal method of operating a pound. Nets may not be lowered in a pound to allow for free movement of herring into a pound. Pound operators may only lower their nets when transferring herring into the pound and when releasing herring immediately prior to the time the spawn-on-kelp will be harvested from the pound.
13. All lines of kelp must be plainly and legibly marked with the number of kelp blades on that line. This permit stipulation was requested by Fish and Wildlife Protection to help ensure that kelp blade allocations are not exceeded. (Duct tape numbered with waterproof ink will satisfy this requirement.)

14. A pound operator may only introduce their allocated limit of herring into their pound one time. Pound operators will not be allowed to release their herring and then capture more herring for the same pound.
15. After harvesting their product or when discontinuing operation all fishermen must first contact the department before leaving the fishing grounds.
16. After release of the captured herring, the pound, including webbing, will remain in place for a minimum of four weeks. Egg covered webbing must remain on the pound frame in the original configuration with adequate water circulation on all sides to optimize hatching success. The department will notify pound operators through a news release when pounds may be removed from the water.
17. The permit must be in the possession of the pound operator at all times.
18. The pound structure must be completely removed from the water by June 7, 1995.
19. The Alaska Board of Fisheries has adopted a new regulation setting a maximum size limit for herring pound nets to be implemented for the 1995 fishery. This restriction is necessary to avoid exceeding the herring harvest limit established for the fishery. A herring pound net size limit of not more than a 400 square foot opening at the water surface is established.

HARVEST OF KELP

A separate permit is required to harvest kelp for use in the pounds (5AAC 37.900). Kelp harvest permits may be obtained from local department offices. Based on results from the past two years' fisheries, approximately 2 tons, or 15,000 blades, of kelp is needed to produce 12 tons of spawn-on-kelp. This assumes that a 600% weight gain is realized from the kelp to the spawn-on-kelp product harvested. Kelp blades will be allocated equally among the participating fishermen. Kelp permits may be obtained from local Fish and Game offices beginning April 5 and must be completed and returned to the department within 30 days after harvesting of kelp.

ALLOCATION OF GUIDELINE HARVEST

On, or about, April 5, the amount of kelp blades necessary to achieve the 12 ton spawn-on-kelp guideline harvest, as well as the 150 ton allocation of herring, will be divided equally among all permit holders who have completed pounds in the fishing area by April 1, 1994. Notification of the individual allocations will be announced by news release.

Pound operators are advised that individual kelp blade allocations could be severely restricted in 1995 in order to achieve the 12-ton spawn-on-kelp guideline harvest level set for the Hoonah Sound Pound fishery. This past year, the guideline harvest level was greatly exceeded when 123 pound operators using 140 kelp blades per pound harvested 32.7 tons of spawn-on-kelp product. This harvest was almost three times the 12-tons spawn-on-kelp allocation established for this fishery. Assuming similar participation in 1995, pound operators can expect the kelp blade allocation will be restricted to approximately 75 kelp blades per pound operator. This kelp blade restriction is necessary for the department to be in compliance with the regulatory guideline harvest level set for this fishery.

HARVEST AND PRODUCTION

Each permit holder's spawn-on-kelp blades must remain separate from other permit holder's spawn-on-kelp blades until after processing. Permit holders will be allowed to harvest all the product produced in their pounds. A permit holder's fish ticket must report only the spawn-on-kelp harvested from his/her own pound. A representative of the department must inspect and seal all containers of harvested spawn-on-kelp product (including trimmings) before they are transported from the fishing grounds for processing. All fishermen and any vessel carrying spawn-on-kelp product must first contact the department before leaving the fishing grounds.

FISHERY CONDUCT AND MANAGEMENT

Suitable sites for pounds in Hoonah Sound are limited. To avoid herring mortality and damage to the pounds, operators should locate their pounds in an area with minimal exposure to wind and wave action, and with a relatively deep bottom. The distance from where the herring are captured and the pound site should also be considered since long towing distances can cause considerable stress and mortality of herring. The area between Emmons Island and Vixen Island has been the main focus for anchoring pounds since herring normally spawn near this area.

The department will station a state vessel and personnel in Hoonah Sound when herring are available for capture. Department personnel will closely monitor all phases of the fishery to assure compliance with permit conditions. All fishery announcements, including updates of herring activities and fishery openings, will be broadcast by VHF radio, Channel 10. Fishermen are strongly encouraged to have a VHF radio.

The department will be closely monitoring herring activity in Hoonah Sound by vessel and aerial surveys. There will be a set date when pound operators may capture herring to be transferred into pounds. This date will be 12:01 AM, April 6. If it appears spawning will occur earlier than this date, the fishery may be opened earlier to avoid loss of the fishery.

The capture and transfer of herring into pounds will be monitored to ensure that allocations are not exceeded and to document any mortality of herring. To avoid mortality, the transport of herring to the pound site must be done with the pound itself or a towable net pen. Transporting with a purse seine will not be allowed. Pound operators are also advised to tow slowly to avoid crushing herring against the net. The department will regulate the fishery by setting and enforcing a strict limitation on the number of kelp blades that can be put in each permit holders pound. Pound operators will then be allowed to harvest all of the spawn-on-kelp from their pounds.

REQUIREMENTS FOR BUYERS

Operators of floating processing vessels will be required to report in person, by VHF radio, or by telephone, to the Department of Fish and Game office in Sitka before the start of processing operations in Hoonah Sound. These reporting requirements are specified by regulation 5AAC 39.130 (f).

Fish tickets must be submitted to the department within seven days after landing. Fish tickets should be sent to the Department of Fish and Game, Commercial Fisheries Management and Development Division, 304 Lake St. Room 103, Sitka, Alaska 99835-7563, or submitted to a representative of the department before leaving the fishing area.

Floating processing vessels or tenders carrying spawn-on-kelp product from the fishery should first contact the department before leaving the fishing grounds.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game permits required to operate a pound and harvest kelp for transport into a pound, pound operators must also obtain an interim use permit (L21A) from the

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. Individuals who do not have pound permits but are assisting in the operation of the fishery in any manner must have a crew member license. All commercial vessels (including skiffs) used in the fishery are required to be licensed with the Limited Entry Commission. Fishermen are required to display the permanent vessel license plate (ADF&G number) on both sides of the hull, cabin, or mast in permanent symbols at least 12 inches high and with lines at least 1-inch wide that contrast with the background.

Applications for vessel and interim use permits are available from all offices of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game or can be obtained by writing the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, 8800-109 Glacier Hwy, Juneau, Alaska 99801-8079. Crew member licenses may be obtained from local vendors in most communities.

NEW REGULATIONS EFFECTIVE IN 1995

During the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting held in Ketchikan January 1994, new regulations were adopted for the Southeast Alaska herring spawn-on-kelp fisheries which will be effective for the 1995 fishery.

A maximum size limit for herring pound nets of not more than a 400 square foot opening at the water surface was adopted.

Other regulation changes adopted included: specifying the location where herring pounds may be operated, and the date when herring may be captured. The area and date are the same as used during last year's fishery under emergency order authority.

The regulation requiring the department to divide the herring harvest limit equally among those operating permits has been repealed. The 150-ton herring harvest limit for the Hoonah Sound fishery will remain unchanged, and therefore the spawn-on-kelp harvest objective for the fishery will remain at 12 tons. Individual herring allocations will no longer be required.

The regulation requiring weighing of all spawn-on-kelp product at the time it is removed from the pound has been repealed. This regulation became unnecessary since fishermen are allowed to harvest all the product from their pounds and weighing takes place at the processing plants.

OTHER AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

Prospective pound operators are advised to consider other agency requirements for constructing and operating pounds in Hoonah Sound. Some of these requirements are discussed briefly below; however, a pound operator is urged to contact the U.S. Forest Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the United States Coast Guard to determine other regulations and requirements.

U.S. Forest Service

In the Hoonah Sound area, the U.S. Forest Service has jurisdiction over and manages the land above mean high tide. People who plan to use National Forest land in connection with the fishery must apply for a special use permit from the Forest Service prior to any occupancy. These land uses include temporary camps, temporary equipment storage, and herring pound storage.

Special use permit applications are available at the Sitka Ranger District Office, 204 Siginaka Way, Sitka, Alaska 99835, (907-747-6671). Completed applications should be submitted to the Sitka Ranger District by February 10, 1995. The permit fee is \$100.00, and in most cases a bond will be required.

National Marine Fisheries Service

The National Marine Fisheries Service (907-747-6940) regulates activities which might harm marine mammals. Herring pounds are classed as a Category 3 fishery, which means that participating fishermen do not need to apply for an "exemption". Fishermen may not kill sea lions, sea otters, whales, porpoises or dolphins. Fishermen must report mortality of marine mammals associated with their activities. Since federal regulations may change at any time, fishermen should check with their local NMFS office before fishing.

United States Coast Guard

Structures such as floating fish pens are subject to the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33, Part 64. This regulation requires an owner to apply for a Coast Guard permit and to install and maintain a light or other private aid to navigation if the Coast Guard determines it to be necessary to protect maritime navigation.

The proposed pens of the Hoonah Sound Spawn-on-Kelp Pound Fishery do not require permits for private aids to navigation at this time, provided the owners:

1. Place two signs on opposite corners of the structure. These signs will be worded "Danger, Fish Pens" (Figure 2).
2. Place a single, all-points white light on one corner sign on structures less than 400 sq. ft. in size.
3. Place a single all-points white light on every corner of structures larger than 400 sq. ft. in size.
4. Anchor fish pens within the boundary area specified by this permit.
5. Remove the pens from the water by June 7, 1995.

If all these conditions are not met, the permit holder must apply to the Coast Guard for an individual "Private Aids to Navigation permit". If you have questions, call at the Coast Guard Aids to Navigation office, at 463-2254.

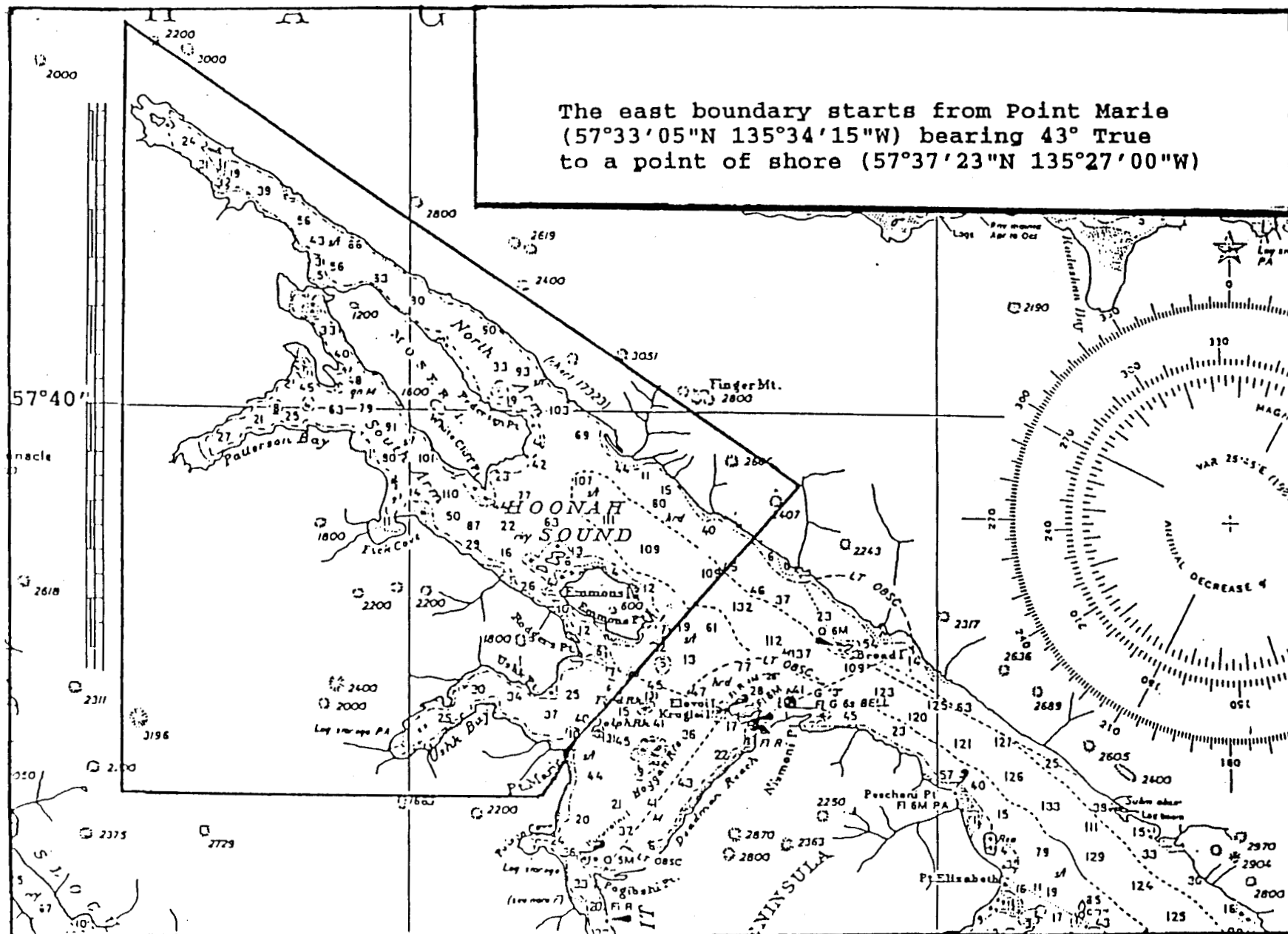
Table 1. Hoonah Sound herring stock spawn survey, 1981-1994.

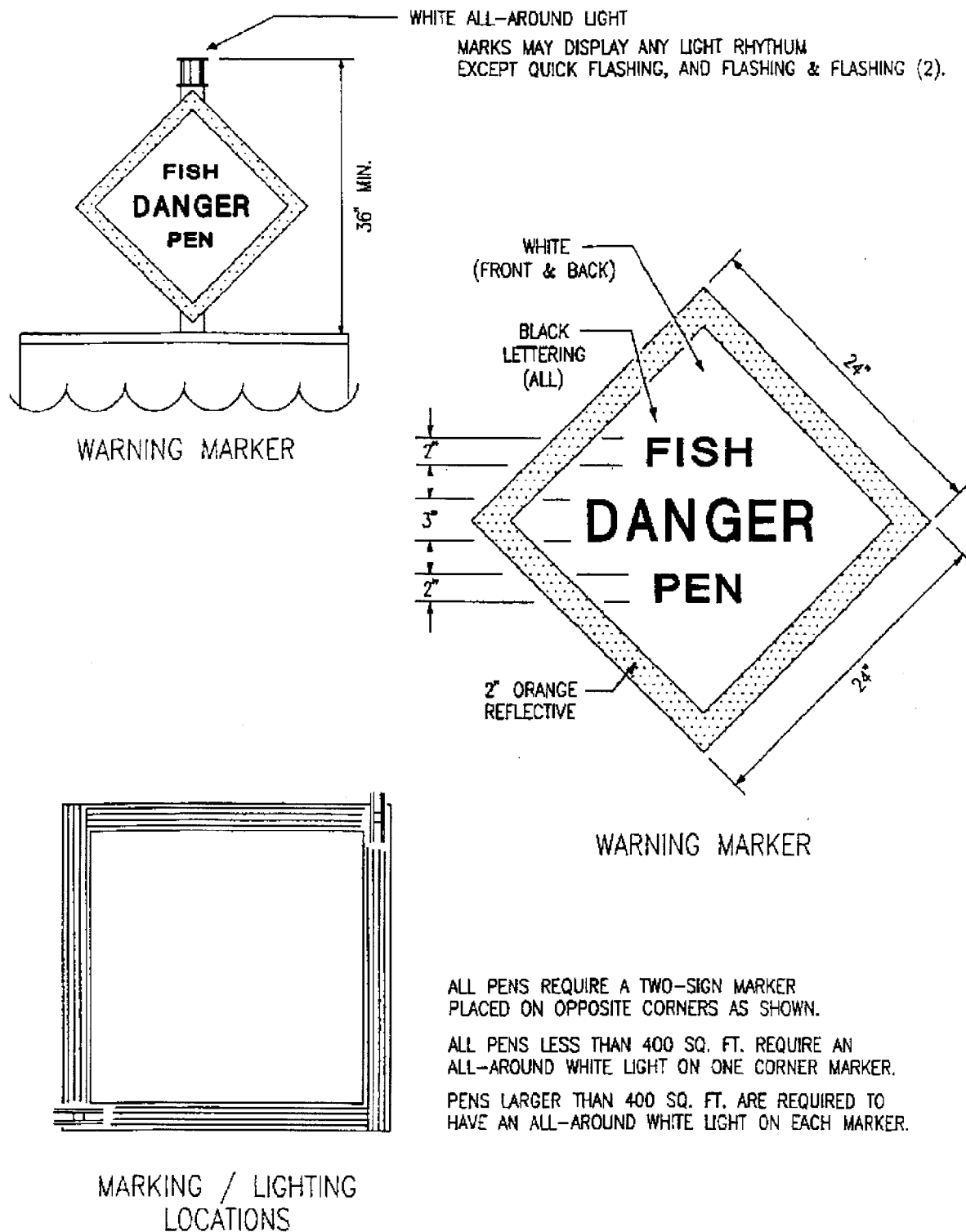
YEAR	DATES	SPAWNING NAUTICAL MILES OF SPAWN	SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS (TONS)
1971	5/10-5/17	2.5	N/A
1972	5/11-5/12	1.5	N/A
1973	N/A	1.0	N/A
1974	5/14	3.0	N/A
1975	N/A	0	N/A
1976	5/5	1.0	N/A
1977	N/A	3.5	N/A
1978	N/A	5.3	N/A
1979	N/A	N/A	N/A
1980	N/A	N/A	N/A
1981	4/30-5/01	2.25	753
1982	4/29-5/01	1.5	N/A
1983	5/01	1.0	N/A
1984	4/26-5/01	3.0	540
1985	5/01-5/03	3.5	N/A
1986	4/28-5/01	3.75	N/A
1987	4/28-5/02	3.75	740
1988	4/30-5/01	5.0	N/A
1989	4/16-4/20	17.0	4,000
1990	4/13-4/28	10.0	2,350
1991	4/19-4/24	8.7	2,175
1992	4/22-4/24	10.8	5,714
1993	4/27-4/29	5.75	1,099
1994	4/21-4/23	9.00	2450
AVERAGE		4.28	2,202

Table 2. Hoonah Sound herring spawn-on-kelp fishery summary, 1990-1994.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Herring Quota (tons)	150	150	150	150	150
Harvest Quota (tons)	11	12	12	12	12
Harvest (tons)	11.9	13.25	23.12	14.0	32.7
Ex-Vessel Value	\$164,083	\$206,401	\$322,343	\$344,907	\$1,224,631
Average Price/lb	\$6.90	\$7.79	\$6.97	\$12.33	\$18.73
Average Income	\$1,657	\$2,487	\$2,985	\$5,389	\$11,133
Number of Applicants	400	185	199	230	195
Number of Pounds	128	104	120	115	123
Number Selling Product	99	83	108	64	109
Herring Allocation (tons)	15.63	14.18	13.63	8.13	9.17
Kelp Allocation (blades)	240	280	240	160	140
Number of Kelp Permits	26	25	27	25	25
Kelp Blade Harvest	31,260	28,355	27,255	16,260	18,340
Harvest Limit (lbs)	170	none	none	none	none
Fishery Open - Closed	4/13-4/22	4/6-4/25	4/6-4/26	4/6-5/3	4/6-4/25
Fishing Occurred	4/13-4/22	4/15-4/25	4/17-4/26	4/26-5/2	4/21-4/24
Harvest Occurred	4/18-	4/22-4/29	4/22-4/30	4/25-5/2	2/25-4/27

Spawn-on-Kelp boundary area for herring pound structures





MARKING DIAGRAM

Figure 2. Coast Guard requirements for marking pounds.

LIST OF MANAGEMENT CONTACTS

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